

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-06

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 179987

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, IS, PN

SUBJECT: ISRAELI ARMS SALE TO PANAMANIAN

REFERENCE: (A) TEL AVIV 4725; (B) PANAMA 4580

1. DEPARTMENT CONSIDERS THAT GOI ARMS SALE TO PANAMA, IF CONSUMATED, WOULD GIVE PANAMA A MILITARY CAPABILITY TO DAMAGE CANAL INSTALLATIONS BY INDIRECT FIRE FROM REPUBLIC OF PANAMA TERRITORY OUTSIDE OF CANAL ZONE THAT IT DOES NOT NOW POSSESS. WORST CASE SCENARIO, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE FIRING OF PANAMANIAN WEAPONS FROM WITHIN URBAN AREAS, COULD HAVE REGRETABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE UNITED STATES. THEREFORE, DEPARTMENT'S JUDGMENT THAT INDIRECT FIRE CAPABILITY OF THE SIZE PROPOSED BE DENIED TO PANAMA IF POSSIBLE.

2. DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES EMBASSY PANAMA ARGUMENT
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EXPRESSED IN REF B THAT GOP MAY TRY SEEK ARMS FROM OTHER

PARTIES IF TURNED DOWN BY GOI. HOWEVER, DEPARTMENT BELIEVES DANGER ASSOCIATED WITH AN INCREASED PANAMANIAN INDIRECT FIRE CAPABILITY AS OUTLINED IN PARA 1 ABOVE OUTWEIGHS RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH GOP ACQUIRING ARMS FROM OTHER SOURCES. FYI: DEPARTMENT WOULD ATTEMPT TO DISSUADE OTHER SIMILAR GOP-THIRD PARTY ARMS DEALS AS THEY BECOME KNOWN.

3. DEPARTMENT REQUESTS EMBASSY TEL AVIV RESPOND TO GOI MFA APPROACH ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: PROPOSED SALE WOULD NOT BE IN U.S. INTERESTS; THE U.S. REQUESTS, THEREFORE, THAT SALE NOT BE UNDERTAKEN. IN SENSITIVE SITUATION NOW EXISTING IN PANAMA, U.S. WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE ISRAEL PROVIDE GOP WITH AN ENHANCED OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY, WHICH COULD BE DIRECTED AGAINST U.S. FORCES. WHILE RECOGNIZING POSSIBILITY THAT GOP CAN OBTAIN WEAPONS FROM OTHER SOURCES, U.S. WOULD OPPOSE SUCH SALES WHERE POSSIBLE AND IN ANY EVENT COULD NOT AGREE TO ARMS TRANSFERS TO THE DETRIMENT OF U.S. SECURITY. YOU MAY WISH TO POINT OUT THAT PLASTIC EXPLOSIVES ARE IDEAL FOR USE IN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES WHICH BOTH ISRAEL AND U.S. HAVE RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTROL. INGERSOLL

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